

# The Heart of the Continent

International Partnership

Mission: The Heart of the Continent Partnership works to inclusively build vibrant and resilient communities that value and protect public lands in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario

## Notes from the Roundtable Sept. 11-13 2018

Evening Presentations  
 Land Managers Meeting  
 2019 Bike the Heart Project  
 Organization Strategic Planning  
 Starry Sky Presentation  
 2019 March Science Symposium  
 Voyageur Island—Voyageur Wilderness Programme  
 Atikokan & Quetico Provincial Park



## HOCP Roundtable Gathering In Atikokan/Quetico



*“The Heart of the Continent Partnership provides a great opportunity for agency, municipality, and non-governmental organization representatives to work collaboratively to identify shared issues related to the public lands of our region. The ultimate goal of the partnership is the on-going protection of these spectacular places so that people can enjoy them and our quality of life is sustained.”*  
 Bob DeGross—Superintendent, Voyageurs National Park



**Our Host, Michelle Savoie**  
**Voyageur Wilderness Programme**

Michelle Savoie talked about the history of the Voyageur, the canoe and paddling, Quetico Provincial Park, the environment, family and her Metis roots and bring it all together in a passion that truly makes her much more than just an outfitter. She has a true love of sharing the beauty and history of the area and cares deeply for it. Along with a welcoming us and preparing us for our stay at Voyageur Island she shared the Goh Iromoto film THE CANOE a multi award winning video that celebrates the Canoeing Culture of Ontario and also features in part Michelle Savoie “The Connector” and Family. Many Thanks to Michelle, Dale, Jen, Madeline, and Lumpy the bull dog for being wonderful hosts



**International Dark Sky Association**  
**Randy Larson and Cynthia Lapp Starry Skies Superior**

Just prior to the week long event being held in and around Duluth MN “Celebrate the Night Sky Week” Cynthia Lapp and Randy Larson made a cordial visit to Voyageur Island to delight us with a presentation on the work they have been doing for IDA Starry Skies Lake Superior.



Starry Skies Lake Superior is a “friendly neighbourhood chapter of Dark Skies International”, a group dedicated to educate about the importance of dark skies, the drawbacks of light pollution and working towards friendly outdoor lighting that is less intrusive. They stressed on the job we all should be doing to become better stewards of our regions skies. Light pollution not only pollutes the environment much like any other pollution, it can carry a cost. It disrupts ecosystems, has adverse effects on safety, reduces aesthetics and value of communities. It was evident that Cynthia and Randy were passionate about their project and it was contagious.

Photo: Randy Larson pointing out light intensity in areas around the Heart of the Continent.

*“I’m fortunate to find land management partners that equally appreciate the value of a visibly starry night sky.  
Being connected to such a primitive feeling and scene is part of a wilderness experience”  
Ann Schwaller—Natural Resources Forest Wilderness Program Manager  
Superior National Forest—Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness*

## Notes from the Roundtable—Sept. 12

### Land Managers Meeting

Ontario Parks -Trevor Gibb, James Bennett, Chris Stromberg

OMNRF—Shelton Haw

MNDNR—Patty Thielen

USFS—Connie Cummins, Meg Roessing, Ann Schwaller

NPS—Bob DeGross, Craig Hansen, Bob Meadows,

### Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry—Sheldon Haw

Trevor Gibb introduced Sheldon Haw A/District Resource Management Supervisor

Sheldon presented on the responsibilities of our Crown Land management. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is an Ontario government agency responsible for our Crown Lands including forestry, fisheries, wildlife, mineral aggregate, fire energy renewable and non-renewable resources. Sheldon explained the MNRF districts and for many in the group the Crown Land camping fees, green zone areas and what that meant to visitors.

The mission of the MNRF is a healthy ecosystem enabling sustainable development.

### Proposed Crane Lake Visitor Center—Bob DeGross

Bob DeGross, Voyageurs National Park Superintendent gave us an update on the proposed multi-agency facility for Crane Lake.

The energetic community of Crane Lake has

created a sub-committee, Holly Larson National Park Service RTCA is working on a planned charrette (a meeting of stakeholders attempting to resolve conflicts and map solutions) Funding will certainly be an issue. An idea has been presented that the community builds the facility and leases to the Park Service. Connie Cummins mentions that creative ways to find funding can be found by emulating what others have successfully done in a similar venture. Bob says we will need to research what is needed exactly. He suggests that we try to visit the site together, possibly after the science symposium. Patty Thielen agrees, we need to find what it is that is most important for the agencies and community and that knowing it can't be everything for everyone, we try to make it the most for all.

### All Lands Management—Connie Cummins

Connie Cummins, Superior National Forest Supervisor described a partnership with that the FS has been nurturing with land managers across landscapes in an 'all-lands' philosophy. She discussed that while organizational polices may differ, common interests can provide opportunities that benefit by partnering. Projects across landscapes are based on mutual trust and often requires an intermix of public and private lands. An example of where this works well is in our timber program using our "Good Neighbor Authority". Under an agreement, Minnesota's DNR is able to implement projects on FS lands as well as on their lands. This greatly improve the efficiency of restoration treatments by allowing for more diverse funding sources, synchronizing activities with other landowners, and implementing treatments at larger scales. And at a larger landscape scale, we work with multiple partners, including Ontario, on issues of wildfire, and those related to wilderness.

This greatly emulates what the Heart of the Continent has been working on and towards for many years.

Trevor Gibb, Quetico Provincial Park Superintendent mentions that an all lands management collaborative justifies the work we share under the Sister Sites Arrangement.

*"The Heart of the Continent Partnership provides an international forum for land managers, volunteer partners, and local tourism officials to work together towards common goals. The synergy of this group accomplishes far more than the sum of its parts could." - Patty Thielen, NE Regional Director, MN DNR*

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Ann Schwaller, USFS Forest Wilderness Program Manager, “The land manager’s Sister Site Arrangement also allows for better visitor use planning such as diverting visitors from completely booked BWCAW entry points. When a visitor settles on an area they’d like to enjoy in the BWCAW but the entry points to that area are booked for their desired vacation days, it makes sense to protect physical and social resources by preventing overcrowding and encouraging those visitors to perhaps enter that general area from a different type of entry than they’re used to. This strategy helps neighboring locations gain more visitors and recognition such as Quetico and La Verandrye Provincial Parks, Voyageur’s National Park and Grand Portage National Monument, as well as Minnesota state parks. There’s no reason why we can’t work together to help visitors get to where they want to be and protect the resource at the same time. We don’t want to turn away visitors and potential tourism revenue to the heart of the continent, which includes all of these land management units, so we should try to keep those visitors in the area.”

Chris Stromberg, Quetico a/backcountry operations specialist described the collaborative efforts out in the field this last summer. Backcountry crews from Quetico Provincial Park met with the Kawishiwi Ranger District of the Superior National Forest and joined forces to improve and maintain a number of shared portages along the Canada/USA border near Carp and Knife Lakes. They were able to improve the tread of high use portages and prevent further erosion. Five portages received major improvements that included check dams, water bars and reshaping drains. In addition to the trail improvements the crews were able to share skills in paddling, low impact camping techniques, trail maintenance, safety and interaction/public contact with visitors.

### Dark Sky Initiative

**Bob Meadows NPS** led the talks on how to make the steps towards designation/certification and like the presentation from Randy and Cynthia the night before he stressed that it was a continued effort to strive for improving agencies and communities at becoming stewards of dark sky. Other multi-agency groups have collaborated in a dark sky designation, Bob talked of the different areas that have been designated, similarly the Crown of the Continent. Chris pointed out that Ontario parks has had two recent designated parks that included Killarney and Lake Superior PP. Trevor confirmed this and said Ontario Parks has a goal to get other parks designated. He will follow up with the parks that have been certified and the steps that they took. Bob said that the National Park Service would consider funding for an internship to work on the HOC dark sky initiative and would help each agency to be certified. The intern could also try to bring the communities on board if they were interested in being involved. Tasks at hand are finding a point person from each agency . Ohio Northern University will assist us and assess outdoor lighting facilities of each agency interested in seeking designation.



Brian Jackson—Quetico biologist  
Randy Larson  
Cynthia Lapp—Starry Skies Superior  
Bob DeGross—Voyageurs National Park



Bob Meadows—NPS  
Bob Degross—VNP NPS  
Meg Roessling— USFS



Trevor Gibb—Ontario Parks  
Craig Hansen—NPS

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## Notes from the Roundtable—Sept. 12 Bike the Heart

Frank Jewell, Melissa Gagne, Molly MacGregor, Jeff O'Brien, Cynthia Lapp, Clara Butikofer, Mike Heaton, Gord Knowles, Linda Braun, John Cameron, Andy Hubley, Randy Larson, Courtney Lanthier, Sara Leatherdale, Jesse Engebretson, Brian Jackson

Frank led the discussion and started by describing the work that had been held to date:

1. Large maps have been prepared of the area in readiness for biking routes to be added.
2. A compiled list of bike shops and organizations was shared. Objective—to gather people to ride together in various trails in the Heart of the Continent.

Suggested format:

Events will be promoted from June –September, 2019

Event hosts will be included—bike shops and community groups.

Summary of Conclusions and action steps:

1. HOCP will prepare a logo for this event and a description that will be used consistently for promotion.
2. The biking events that will have HOCP branding, will be organized by a local bike shop, organization, individual community organization or “Healthy Living” affiliation.
3. All rides should be added to the Travel the Heart website.
4. There is hope to attract up to 20 rides over the time period.
5. An effort will be made to feature existing larger biking events with the HOCP biking logo.
6. Sponsorship should be sought for this series of events

Notes recorded by—Clara Butikofer



Strategies forming  
Group working on Bike the Heart  
Initiative



The talks continue throughout the breaks



Frank Jewell—St. Louis Cty Commissioner  
Molly MacGregor—MNDNR

*“Biking has proved to have significant economic impact on nearby communities Heart of the Continent’s existing tourism infrastructure of motels, resorts, restaurants, and other service businesses will benefit from cyclists’ dollars. The Heart of the Continent is like a natural fit to be the conduit for a planning effort and future marketing opportunities. A collaborative effort from cycling clubs, bike shops and stakeholders would benefit from partnering to promote the heart of the continent as a biking destination.”*

*Andy Hubley— Director, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission*

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## Notes from the Roundtable—Sept. 12 Travel the Heart website and Tourism

Frank Jewell, Melissa Gagne, Molly MacGregor, Jeff O'Brien, Cynthia Lapp, Clara Butikofer, Mike Heaton, Gord Knowles, Linda Braun, John Cameron, Andy Hubley, Randy Larson, Courtney Lanthier, Sara Leatherdale, Jesse Engebretson, Brian Jackson

**A.** John Cameron started the discussion with a briefing of what Travel the Heart (TTH) is and its relationship with National Geographic (NG)

### Positives:

1. Kudos to the interns for adding new nominations.
2. John shared the website data and our recent Facebook posts seem to be driving users to the page. There are mixed reviews of the value of the site to businesses
3. In general there was a sense that we must continue to maintain the page for our smaller communities that can't afford their own tourism pages

### Current Obstacles and Concerns with Travel the Heart:

1. John needs to be added as an editor and his emails have received no response.
2. Selling ads will allow the site to pay for itself. John has two potential sponsors that could support this. He needs to connect with NG in order to have the ability to change the format to feature ads.
3. Discussion was raised about the value of the NG brand and if there is a need to run this website under their authority NG doesn't promote these websites. It is difficult for users to find.
4. We would like to know more about what we get for the \$5500 U.S.
5. Without search engine authorization we are unable to add tags to the site, which makes the site lower in searches.
6. There was an agreement that these are questions we need answers for.

### B. Facebook:

1. The Facebook page is quite active.
2. Facebook administrators need to communicate regarding frequency and scheduling of posts
3. Clara will send out a communication about this

### C. Information regarding Tourism Thunder Bay

1. Tourism Thunder Bay is now under the Thunder Bay Economic Development Corporation
2. The new hotel tax generated will now be the funds available for the Tourism Budget giving the department much more flexibility



*"The energy at our tourism round table was one of cooperation and inspiration. Melissa Gagne, who attended for the first time from Destination Thunder Bay brought a fresh perspective reminding us of the opportunities for visitors in our area. Together, we can overcome the challenges facing our region and find the best way to showcase our remarkable landscape."*  
Clara Butikofer—Co-Chair, Heart of the Continent Partnership

## Notes from the Roundtable—Sept. 12

### Strategic Planning Meeting

Attendees: Gord Knowles, Clara Butikofer, Bob DeGross, Ann Schwaller, Connie Cummins, Meg Roessing, Linda Braun, Patty Thielen, Molly MacGregor, James Haskell, Frank Jewell, Courtney Lanthier, Craig Hansen, Trevor Gibb, Sara Leatherdale, Bob Meadows, Cynthia Lapp, Randy Larson, Jesse Engebretson, Andy Hubley, Mike Heaton, Jeffrey O'Brien, John Cameron, Brian Jackson, Tonia Kittelson, Melissa Gagne



Chris Stromberg started the meeting with a slideshow to give an overview of HOCP, where we began, our mission and accomplishments.

Clara Butikofer (co chair hocp) took the lead on discussions; she talked of our position, the strategic plan our past intern created, the surveys of our steering committee members to come to some conclusions and how we may move forward. Gord Knowles (Atikokan Economic Development) stated that there was a lot of talent in the room and within our organization, we need to draw from and utilize from it. It is difficult to be a volunteer lead group and we need to make plans to be self sustaining.



Molly MacGregor (MNDNR)-mentioned that an entire strategic plan is hard to do and that it may make more sense to pick items that we are working on and a lead to drive that project. Linda Braun (Ministry Northern Development and Mines) noted that from what she understands, the organization doesn't require a lot of funds to operate and it seems clear would benefit to seek out opportunities for a continued paid position. Gord believes there is a need to have more interaction with CVB's, visitor centers and Chambers of Commerce's. He feels the land managers have a good grasp of our work but we are in need of more engagement from community tourism and economic development experts.



Tonia Kittelson who had just arrived introduced herself. She talked about her involvement with HOCP is because the group actually gets good things done. "Hocp helps land managers across agencies and countries to talk more regularly which helps manage a very large landscape as an ecosystem instead of one divided by arbitrary human boundaries. Hocp initiates events like the Bike the Heart that connect people to public lands and drive economic activity to rural communities. Not to mention HOCP's role in sharing scientific research across the geographic area."



Clara asked about if a community could be informed about Provincial Park decisions like permanent closing of a park. She commented on how that affects a community and if they were kept informed may be able to assist in keeping a park open. Trevor Gibb (Ontario Parks) said that although there are parks that have been kept operating with a joint partnership with local communities that some decisions are made from upper management and even the park superintendent doesn't receive a prior notice of a park closure.

Conversations also touched on the recruitment of a new co-chairs of the Heart of the Continent Partnership and steering committee members. As Gord had mentioned earlier, there was a lot of talent in the room promising a good future for the Heart of the Continent Partnership

## Notes from the Roundtable—Sept. 12 Science Symposium

Molly MacGregor, Cynthia Lapp, Mike Heaton, Andy Hubley, Randy Larson, Courtney Lanthier, Jesse Engebretson, Brian Jackson, Bob DeGross, Ann Schwaller, Bob Meadows, Connie Cummins, Meg Roessing, Patty Thielen, Craig Hansen, Tonia Kittelson, Chris Stromberg

### HOCP Science Symposium

In 2016 HOCP held a science symposium in International Falls following the Rainy Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum.

We felt the symposium was a great success and responses to it and the format were favourable.

The group felt that we should explore the possibility of holding the HOCP symposium early in the week, prior to the watershed forum. Brian Jackson (Quetico Park biologist) said that in previous years the watershed forum had high level meetings early in the week followed by the rapid fire presentations on Wed and Thurs. If we could hold the HOCP symposium earlier in the week, recognizing that not everyone attends the IJC high level meetings, it may be better then holding the HOCP symposium later when people may be more apt to take off.

Bob DeGross thought we need to work on doing out call for papers soon so that people get the symposium on their radar.

A few things to be mindful of:

- Rather than identifying a focus for the symposium, and immediately discounting some potential presenters, the group felt we should call for papers and arrange the day based upon the papers we receive.
- We need to get a plenary group together soon. Chris was willing to reach out to a potential group and begin arranging.
- We need to be sure to reach out to tribal offices, academic institutions, other agencies, as many organizations as possible to encourage involvement.
- Main focus should be on work being done in the Heart, or that can be translated to the region.

A primary idea for keynote speaker was to invite a lead representative from another regional coordination group (i.e. Crown of the Continent, Colorado Plateau, etc.) to come speak on successes and challenges. Perhaps at end of symposium that person(s) could facilitate a conversation to encourage players in HOCP to take symposium concepts to next steps. It was also suggested to consider selecting a regional group that someone has started or completed a study related to the group. Some felt travel for inviting a rep from another regional group to come speak might not fit within the funds available for the symposium. Agency partners may be able to work together to assist in travel expenses.

